

From the Outside: An Introduction  
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Description: Everyone has told you that your life will be easier once you get your degree, but how much of that is true? This is the first part of an ongoing series that asks RU alumni how college affected their recent entry into The Outside.

When Alice Cooper checked himself into a psychiatric hospital for alcoholism, he observed the lives of people he had only imagined in his songs. He wrote an entire album based on their psychoses and experiences in the ward and released it under the title "From the Inside" in 1978. It was an act of catharsis for his own addiction and education for his fans, probably being the closest writing to his actual persona than that of the stage act, Alice, the Devil's conspirator.

College is The Inside. Although it's the first moment of independence for many students, we all understand that it isn't The Real World, that admonition from parents and teachers whenever we're hungover or turning in a late assignment. It's the last place on earth where you can dress like a kid while maintaining a white collar mindset.

If you're insulted by that comparison, take a look around next time you're out on the Quad. As you pass overly tanned 19-year-olds dressed as punks, goths, thugs, skaters and etc., consider how many will wear those outfits only on weekends after graduation. These are the clothes we've adopted based on cliques that we either belonged to in high school or always wanted to.

Which leads to the reinvention aspect: college is the last chance to be cool. (Sure, adults can be cool, but the ones that act like college students well into their forties reek of desperation and an addiction to underage porn sites.) Many will spend the next four years changing majors, going to or quitting the gym, picking a favorite drink until they get sick from it, coming out of the closet and switching political parties. Some will join fraternities or sororities to replace their family. (It's no coincidence that Greek life is organized into familial units of "bigs" and "littles.") Others will run for the SGA or RHA with aspirations of leadership.

And during all of these reinventions, one factor looms in the background: The Outside. Will your friends be around after you graduate? Did you pick that lottery-winning major that allows you to travel the world and retire to the Caribbean by 50? Are you really a lesbian, or were you just drunk that night? These are the experiences that you will either hide from your children as they reach their teens or impart to them as lessons so they can make their own brand new mistakes.

So where do I come in? I just rediscovered The Outside in May after four years at RU. I say "rediscovered" because I spent three years before in various jobs and living quarters before putting myself in debt for the rest of my life. Anyway, this recent rediscovering puts me in a unique perspective: I've been away just long enough to miss school and worry about you, but not so long ago that I'm nostalgic; I actually went to RU, so my stories should be familiar but not ancient; and my timing reflects the current job market that will more or less be the same once you graduate. That is why I've taken on the task of schoolin' you about school, and how your time at RU will influence your very near future in The Outside.

But I'm not going to be the only voice in this column, because that wouldn't be fair to you. Most of you

are not English majors, Tartan writers, resident assistants or over 21 years old. Every week, I will present anecdotes from graduates of various degrees and backgrounds. You'll hear about how we picked our majors and organizations, where we are now and what—if anything—we would do differently or all over again. And since we're not students anymore, we're not bound by self-incrimination under the Standards of Student Conduct, so you'll get the truth (or at least the truth as we see it).

Until next week, remember: you're not the first person to go to college, nor will you be the last. To paraphrase Red Green, we're all rooting for you.

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